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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 July 1997, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. GALUSKA (Czech Republic)

later: Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh)
(Vice-President)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued)

(h) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (agenda item 6 (h)) (E/1997/7)

Mr. GURGULINO de SOUZA (Rector, United Nations University (UNU)), introducing the 1996 annual report of the Council of the United Nations University (E/1997/7), summarized some of the achievements of his 10-year term of office, which would be completed at the end of August 1997. During that period, the Helsinki-based World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER) had been supplemented by additional research training centres at Maastricht, Accra, Macau and Tokyo, with financial support from the Governments of Finland, the Netherlands, Ghana, Zambia, Portugal, China and Japan and the Governor of Macau.

In addition to the original Programme for Biotechnology for Latin America and the Caribbean at Caracas, two additional research and training programmes had been established: the International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA) at Amman and the International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH) in Ontario. Those programmes were supported by the Governments of Venezuela, Jordan and Canada, respectively. An agreement had been signed to develop a Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland, and a Global Environment Information Centre (GEIC) had been inaugurated at UNU headquarters in Tokyo.

During the past year and a half, UNU had awarded over 200 fellowships for advanced training at its associated or cooperating institutions, and 1,538 fellows had completed such training since the programme's creation in 1976. The UNU press had published or co-published 13 books and sold some 22,600 copies for a total of US$ 300,000; another 2,000 books had been provided at no cost to depository libraries, mainly in developing countries.

UNU had reorganized its work to concentrate on environmentally sustainable development, peace, security and governance and, at the request of the Secretary-General, was working to strengthen its academic contributions and policy inputs in areas of particular importance to the United Nations. Recent achievements in that area included an agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the establishment of a UNESCO chair in leadership studies at the International

Leadership Academy in Amman, a major contribution to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Workshop in March 1997 and a conference on National Strategies and Regional Cooperation for the twenty-first century, organized in cooperation with UNESCO, the Government of Japan and the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific as a preparatory meeting for the World Conference on Higher Education which was to be held at UNESCO headquarters in 1998.

The most immediate challenge was the need for increased funding. While many Governments, international foundations and funding agencies had contributed generously, some major countries had yet to make a voluntary contribution to the UNU Endowment Fund. Financial constraints had forced the University to scale back its connections with research institutions of the developing world. Owing to the appreciation of the Japanese yen, the rate of return on UNU investments had effectively reduced by two thirds the funds available for activities at its headquarters.

Another problem was the University's insufficient visibility as a result of its small core faculty and changing roster of visiting scholars. Through an increasing number of public events related to its programmes and activities, the University hoped to overcome that problem.

Mr. HAYASHI (Japan) said that his Government endorsed the Secretary-General's Track Two proposal that UNU should be a centre for think-tanks contributing to the efforts of the future Strategic Planning Unit.

If the University was to shoulder its new responsibilities as a participant in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), it would be necessary to strengthen its management, organization and headquarters, establish a set of basic policies for its organizational structure, provide it with solid financial base, give its activities higher visibility and foster better understanding with the contributing Governments. Like other components of the United Nations system, the University must eliminate unnecessary administrative expenses in order to maintain public support for its activities. A comprehensive UNU review should be carried out by an appropriate body, such as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). He requested that that point be duly noted in the Council's report on the session.

He hoped that under the leadership of the new Rector, those issues would be addressed and a genuine reform process initiated. He pledged his Government's support for the process and urged other member States to help ensure its success.

Mr. HASSAN (Jordan) said that the UNU International Leadership Academy in Amman was the first branch of the University to be established in the Middle East and the first institution in the region whose purpose was to train future leaders and build bridges of understanding between them. It had been set up with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government of Norway and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Its basic principles were the promotion of democracy, development, institution-building and dispute-resolution with an accent on peace, good governance, the environment, science and technology and development.

Concepts of security had changed and many regimes had been toppled, making governance and diplomacy more complex than before. The Academy, which had undertaken joint activities with several United Nations bodies, endeavoured to make future leaders aware of the challenges posed by xenophobia, extremism and racism. Being convinced of the importance of strengthening bonds of friendship and understanding between future leaders, his Government fully supported the Academy and appealed for increased support from other States.

Mr. JONSSON (Iceland) said that the success of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme, established in Iceland in 1979, had encouraged his Government to sign a recent agreement for the establishment of a Fisheries Training Programme as part of its effor to promote sustainable utilization of renewable marine resources and to contri ute to well-managed and profitable fisheries sectors in the developing countries.

Ms. BAI Yongjie (China) said that her Go ernment attached great importance to its relationship with UNU and believed that the University could make a contribution to peace and development at a time when rapid changes in science and technology required new approaches to research and international cooperation. The University had the advantage of a cross-cultural and multidisciplinary approach and a wide range of experts and areas of research.

Owing to its nature and limited resources, however, it could not cover all fields. As part of the reform of the United Nations system, UNU should improve its research methods, focus more closely on the human dimensions of environment and development and increase the breadth, effectiveness, relevance and feasibility of its research and training activities.

Mr. ZIMYANIN (Russian Federation) said that his delegation would, in due course, submit a draft resolution proposing that, to promote further rationalization of the University's activities, its Annual Report should be regularly considered by the Second Committee of the General Assembly.

Mr. GURGULINO de SOUZA (United Nations University, (UNU)), having thanked the Council for its suggestions concerning the future development of the University and promised to forward the relevant summary record to his successor, said that the UNU Council planned to conduct a comprehensive review of the University's work in 1998. Nevertheless, despite severe staff reductions and limited resources, the University's work had expanded during his term of office. Details of its activities could be found on its Web page (http://www.unu.edu). Given that the purpose of UNU was to assist the developing countries, it was to be hoped that more countries would contribute to its work.

At the suggestion of Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), the Council paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Rector of the United Nations University.

REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES (agenda item 7) (A/52/113-E/1997/18; E/1997/83; E/1997/L.23 and Add.1)

(a) ECONOMIC QUESTIONS

(b) ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

(A/S-19/4-E/1997/13 and Add.1, E/1997/16, A/S-19/7-E/1997/19, A/S-19/8-E/1997/20, E/1997/24, 25, 29, 31, 35 and 52, A/S-19/14-E/1997/60, E/1997/61, A/52/181-E/1997/77, E/1997/82, 86 and 95; E/1997/L.23 and Add.1, L.25 and L.26)

Mr. N'DOW (Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (A/52/181-E/1997/77), said that the sixteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements had provided an opportunity to review the progress made during the first year of follow-up to the Habitat II Conference and address some of the requests made by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/177. The report outlined actions taken to

strengthen the Commission's mandate and examine its working methods within the framework of the need for a system-wide approach to follow-up and implementation and actions taken by the Secretariat and the Commission to strengthen the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) in view of its expanded responsibilities.

It summarized the Commission's recommendations to the General Assembly special session on review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the role of properly planned and managed human settlement in achieving sustainable development and suggested measures to promote implementation of the Habitat Agenda by the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and their intergovernmental machineries.

It also outlined the structure and work programmes of the Commission and the Centre until the year 2001 and highlighted the questions of international cooperation, international development assistance and inter-agency coordination in implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Lastly, it stressed the need for significantly increased, stable, adequate and predictable funding by Governments and the international community.

Mr. KHAN (Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on consumer protection (E/1997/61), recalled that the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection represented an internationally accepted regulatory framework designed to serve as a model for national legislation. The guidelines had recently acquired new significance in the light of globalization and the importance of sustainable development. Consumers must be assured of the quality of services and products in all sectors of economic activity, and have the possibility of redress.

Thanks to effective collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Consumer International, the United Nations had managed to implement a highly successful and ambitious global programme in the field of consumer protection, despite very limited resources. Recent conferences in Africa and Asia had led to the development of model laws and networks of consumer groups, with direct impact on people's lives.

The Council was asked to approve the recommendations contained in the report, in particular that an interregional expert group meeting be convened

to elaborate recommendations for guidelines on sustainable consumption patterns for submission to the Council at its substantive session in 1998 through the Commission for Sustainable Development.

Ms. LABONNE (Director, Division for Economic and Social Development and Natural Resources Management) introducing the Secretary-General's reports on the Fourteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (E/1997/52) and the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas (E/1997/82), said that, although both conferences had attracted participants from other regions, their main function was regional. They were regarded as invaluable forums for technical cooperation, technology transfer, the exchange of experience and the coordination of programmes. Government officials, planners and national decision makers, together with the scientific and academic communities and the private sector, took the opportunity to describe their work, compare the results obtained and programme their future activities. The conferences also enabled the agencies of the United Nations system to direct their programmes of work more effectively.

The topics taken up at the two conferences related above all to development policy. Information and data had been exchanged on the institutional and legal framework and the economic and technical context, with a view to facilitating, modernizing and improving the work of national cartographic agencies at the national and local level, with particular reference to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the implementation of multinational environmental agreements (MEAs).

The Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific had made two recommendations to the Council: that a Fifteenth Regional Cartographic Conference should be convened for five working days in the year 2000 and that the Council should request the Secretary-General, within the limits of available resources, to ensure that the United Nations system continued to support cartographic activities in the region and to facilitate the participation of the least developed countries and small island developing States in those activities.

The Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas had recommended to the Council that a Seventh Regional Cartographic Conference should be convened for five working days in the year 2001 and that

the Council should request the Secretary-General to engage in a dialogue with the member countries of the region and other interested parties with a view to the implementation of the Conference's other resolutions, including the establishment of a special working group.

Mr. VOSSENAAR (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), introducing the report on trade and the environment prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat (A/S-19/4-E/1997/13), said that it examined the significant progress made in recent intergovernmental deliberations on trade and environment within the World Trade Organization (WTO) (particularly the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE)), UNCTAD, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), conceptual and empirical work had managed to allay some of the fears that trade liberalization and economic development were incompatible with environmental protection. Mutual understanding and consensus between trade, environment and development communities was still only beginning to evolve but the post-UNCED debate had strengthened confidence in the ability of the multilateral trading system to respond to the objectives both of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The report also provided a detailed examination of a range of issues including environmental policy and competitiveness and multilateral environmental agreements, identifying outstanding issues such as environmentally sound technologies and products, small and medium-sized enterprises, and environmental costs and resource scarcities in commodity prices. It had been made available to the appropriate bodies and its recommendations were being reflected in the further implementation of Agenda 21.

Ms. BOBBITT (Department for Development Support and Management Services), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the Thirteenth Meeting of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (E/1997/86), said that it set out the main conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting of Experts, which had explored current issues of governance, public administration and finance and reviewed the United Nations work programme in those areas in the light of the

challenges in General Assembly resolution 50/225. The Secretary-General's comments on the Experts' recommendations were to be found in paragraphs 73 to 75. In response to one such recommendation, the Secretary-General had made arrangements for the Fourteenth Meeting of the Group of Experts to be convened in May 1998.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. TORRES (Argentina) said that the document on trade and environmental matters prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat (A/S-19/4-E/1997/13) did not properly reflect the importance of the work done by the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE). The fact that the report on that Committee's first two years of work had not suggested any amendment to the rules of the multilateral trading system did not mean that no progress had been made in rendering the objectives of trade liberalization and greater environmental protection compatible. A number of positive features were indicated in that report. Although a CTE report did not institute any contractual obligations, such a report could, in the case of a dispute, be useful as reflecting a consensus by the States parties on a particular issue.

With regard to competitiveness and environmental protection standards, the report stated that Governments had undertaken not to introduce countervailing duties or other trade measures to offset any real or perceived adverse effects from the application of environmental policies. It had also been recognized that it would be "inappropriate" for Governments to relax national environmental standards and their observance with a view to greater competitiveness. Both statements were highly important: the first to prevent the exportation of environmental standards under the threat of trade sanctions, and the second, to prevent the non-application of local standards being used as a tool for gaining trade advantage.

In respect of the link between the multilateral trading system and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), the Committee recognized that trade measures adopted within the framework of the MEAs could find accommodation within the provisions of article XX of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). That article established the conditions under which States members could adopt certain exceptional measures, for example those necessary to protect the life and health of persons, even if, in order to do so, they must depart from the general principles of the multilateral trading system.

That recognition left two important questions to be settled. It accepted that protection of the environment was included among the exceptions permitted by article XX, and it accepted that the environmental good to be protected by an exceptional measure could be outside the national territory of the State member applying the measure (such as the ozone layer, the atmosphere, fishing on the high seas, etc.). While that should not be interpreted as rendering it possible to apply measures that fell within the jurisdiction of other member States, it did imply the right to protect an environmental good that was not exclusively contained within the national frontiers of the State applying the measure.

Thus, by taking up some of the principles of the Rio Declaration, the report virtually incorporated them into the multilateral trading system and, consequently, strengthened the Declaration. The report assimilated trade measures adopted within the framework of MEAs to the so-called "positive measures", such as financial and technical cooperation, transfer of technology and so on, contemplated in the Declaration, that might be essential to enable the developing countries to comply with the provisions of the environmental agreements.

Another particularly sensitive topic was that of the relationship between the WTO dispute-settlement system and the systems set out in the MEAs. There was no hierarchical relationship between the two types of agreement, nor was there any judicial authority to resolve possible conflicts between the two. That could mean that, in a dispute between two countries both of which were signatories to both agreements about trade measures applied under an MEA, each party to the dispute could opt for one or other settlement system as being best suited to its particular situation. In that connection, the CTE report took the view that, in the case of disputes relating to obligations assumed under MEAs, an attempt should be made to settle them through recourse to the machinery of the MEA concerned.

A third important topic was eco-labelling. The point at issue there was whether discrimination among products through that kind of certification was or was not in conformity with the rules of the multilateral trading system. There had been no agreement on the matter, but the CTE recommended compliance

with the rules set out in the Code of Good Practice of the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT) and recognized the need for greater transparency in the preparation, adoption and use of eco-labels.

A fourth important item was the relationship between subsidies and the environment. That was a highly important matter as far as enhancing the synergy between environmental protection policies and international trade was concerned. Trade liberalization was no guarantee of greater environmental protection, especially when the prices of the goods concerned did not reflect the real cost of production. Subsidies, clearly had a distorting effect on international prices. For a policy of sustainable production to be effective, the price of goods must reflect both the private cost of production and the environmental externalities generated in their production, distribution, consumption and disposal.

That criterion, known as the "internalization of environmental costs" was internationally recognized in the Rio Declaration. Environmental costs must not be taken out of that context. For prices to reflect the environmental cost of production, it was essential that those costs should first reflect the private cost of production. Some developed countries seemed inclined to forget that. If prices were distorted by government subsidies, there could be no question of adding to them the environmental costs of production.

A fourth topic was products that were prohibited domestically. There had been much debate on that subject in GATT with a view to the adoption of an agreement to regulate the international trade in such products. The CTE was continuing that work, and had asked the WTO secretariat to create a database of information on environmental measures restricting or prohibiting the domestic sale of products in that category. He had thus been surprised to discover that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat was engaged in drawing up a "Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or not Approved by Governments" (E/1997/61, para. 27). The fact that no mention had been made of that List in the CTE discussions seemed to be a glaring example of a lack of coordination.

Ms. CASSAM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO's activities to implement the outcome of Habitat II took place within the framework of a programme of management of

social transformation and capacity-building known as MOST. The activities included an interdisciplinary project, entitled "Cities, management of social transformation and environment", designed to fight urban poverty, support women's activities and upgrade and protect the environment. The project, which was being implemented by the UNESCO regional offices, with the help of NGOs and bilateral cooperation, was taking place in three cities, in the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America.

Another project, entitled "Urban development and water resources" was being implemented jointly, in another three cities, by the UNESCO social development and science sections. Its aims included the upgrading of housing and the protection of historic waterfronts, as well as support for traditional activities and raising public awareness of the importance of natural-resource management.

A third project was concerned with revitalizing the social and urban fabric of inner city areas. Its aims included a campaign against poverty and exclusion, support for traditional activities and upgrading of the poorest housing. That project was currently taking place in the cities of Quito, Lima and Tunis. A further related project, to be implemented in 1998/99 would be aimed at enhancing the university teaching and training of city professional staff.

Mr. YAMPOLSKI (Observer for Ukraine) welcomed the report on trade and environmental matters (A/S-19/4-E/1997/13), particularly those parts of it dealing with the progress made in linking sustainable development and environmentally safe produce with trade.

Ukraine was undergoing far-reaching economic transition, and foreign investment and cooperation was vital for its market reforms and the resolution of its environmental problems, many of which were transnational in character.

Despite the difficult environmental legacy left by a Soviet Union which had treated natural resources as if they were inexhaustible, Ukraine had ratified over 20 environmental conventions and was endeavouring to meet its international commitments under them, including those to reduce air pollution and to limit the production and utilization of ozone-depleting substances. The new Constitution, adopted in June 1996, had enabled national legislation to be brought into line with international standards, including many pertaining to the environment.

His delegation urged the members of the Council to support, at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, the initiative of the President of Ukraine on the need for international legislation to guarantee global environmental security. Such legislation would define admissible standards for the environmental behaviour of each country, in the interests of the survival and well-being of all mankind in the coming century.

To increase environmental safety in Europe, his Government had decided to close down the remaining Chernobyl reactors by the year 2000. It hoped that the G-7 countries would meet their commitments under the relevant memorandum and assist Ukraine in that regard.

His delegation expressed its appreciation to the United Nations Special Mission which had studied the consequences in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation of the Chernobyl accident. It was to be hoped that the results of the Mission would receive active support at the United Nations Conference on Chernobyl to be held later in the current year and that the necessary financial resources for dealing with the aftermath of the accident would be made available by donor countries.

Ms. BAI Yongjie (China) said that the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifth session had provided some input to the final document of the General Assembly's Nineteenth Special Session setting out the guidelines and operational framework for the further implementation of Agenda 21. Those guidelines should be implemented faithfully and in a balanced way.

The UNCTAD secretariat's report on trade and environmental matters (A/S-19/4-E/1997/13) acknowledged that the relationship between trade and the environment was more complicated than had been anticipated. Further studies were needed of their interrelationship and of the policy issues concerned. The report did, however, contain a number of useful suggestions which were worth exploring.

Environment and trade must be mutually supportive. For many developing countries, economic growth was the only way of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Bias towards environmental factors on the part of the developed countries and recourse to restrictive trade measures had an adverse effect on developing country exports and, in the last analysis, weakened their ability to protect the environment. The needs and situation of

the developing countries should be taken fully into account, both in theoretical studies of the relationship between trade and environment and in policy-making, and the capacity of the developing countries to protect the environment should be assisted by means, inter alia, of technology transfer.

At its Nineteenth Special Session, the General Assembly had included the environment and trade relationship issue in the multi-year action plan for the Commission on Sustainable Development. Her delegation hoped that, in any future exploration of the issues involved, the common but differentiated responsibilities of the developed and developing countries would be borne in mind.

Mr. ZIMYANIN (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on Sustainable Development was to be commended for identifying important global challenges such as the need to strengthen international legislation and programmes to protect the marine and ocean environments, promote efficient use of energy, ensure the safe disposal of toxic waste, restrict organic pollutants and enhance the environmentally sound development of transport systems and the sustainable use of forests. It was time, however, for practical action.

The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests should be established as soon as possible, preferably so that the first substantive session could be held in early 1998. His delegation supported the Commission's efforts to study the effect of information technology on development and to alert the international community to the importance of sustainable energy systems.

Regarding population and development, his delegation supported the Commission's intention to study the implications of international migratory movements. There should be a concerted follow-up to Habitat II. The role of UNEP should be strengthened, but duplication with the Commission must be avoided.

His delegation endorsed the preparation of a new format for the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods aimed at standardizing the regulations for all types of transport, including marine transport.

Effective governance was crucial to national, social and economic progress, social justice, democracy, respect for human rights and the control of corruption. His delegation thus supported efforts made to implement

General Assembly resolution 50/225, particularly regarding information dissemination, exchange of experience, training and technical collaboration. UNDP was to be commended on the valuable assistance it had rendered in that regard.

Dr. KÄFERSTEIN (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that WHO continued to work with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), within the framework of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, to develop food standards, guidelines and recommendations regarded by WTO as international benchmarks for national requirements. Food produced according to the standards of the Codex Codes of Hygiene and Practice were safe, nutritious and offered adequate health protection, whereas stricter standards, which did not necessarily offer better health protection, could be used as non-tariff barriers to trade.

Through expert committees and consultations with other bodies, WHO continued its practice of risk assessment in relation to food additives, pesticide and veterinary drug residues, and microbiological and other hazards, and made recommendations to Governments and consumers on protective measures against such hazards. Complementing its activities in consumer protection, WHO had published a number of reports, papers, public information material and other documents dealing specifically with food safety. Furthermore, at the request of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Codex secretariat, in consultation with independent, non-governmental consumers' organizations, was preparing a paper on enhancing the role of such organizations in the Codex process.

WHO was actively involved in the promotion of community water supplies and sanitation facilities, and in collaboration with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, was developing a standard for packaged waters other than natural mineral waters.

WHO work in the area of pharmaceuticals had a direct impact on improved safety, quality and efficiency of pharmaceutical and biological products, including vaccines. Globally applicable standards and guidelines were being formulated through the Expert Committees on Pharmaceutical Specifications, on Biologicals, and on the Use of Essential Drugs. In that regard, he mentioned

the series of publications, schemes and programmes developed by WHO, particularly with regard to certification, drug monitoring, and manufacturing and clinical practices.

Mr. HAYASHI (Japan) said he welcomed the reforms proposed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and supported the proposal that a task force be established to examine the restructuring involved.

His Government recognized the importance of United Nations cartographic activities and drew the Council's attention to the contribution of the Japanese Geographical Survey Institute and the United States Government in that field.

With respect to the issue of good governance, he commended the recent work conducted by the expert group and called for a more action-oriented approach. In that regard, he fully endorsed the views expressed by the representative of the Russian Federation.

He expressed appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General on consumer protection (E/1997/61) and the remarks made by the representative of WHO on the guidelines for consumer protection. His delegation would become a sponsor of the draft resolution on consumer protection initiated by the Chilean delegation.

Mr. TORRES (Argentina) said, with reference to the letter from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/S-19/8-E/1997/20) expressing his Government's concern to "strengthen the current international regime controlling the transboundary movement of radioactive waste", that his own and many other countries shared that concern and believed it necessary to increase international cooperation and coordination in that area. Such cooperation should include safeguards to ensure there was no contamination of the marine environment, exchange of information on selected routes, the obligation to communicate to coastal States contingency plans in case of disaster, the commitment to collect radioactive waste in the event of accidents involving transport vessels and the payment of compensation for damage.

His delegation welcomed the comprehensive report on the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods in the 1995-1996 biennium (E/1997/16). His Government fully supported the proposal by the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (para. 17),

that the publication cycle of the Recommendations be expanded from every second year to every fourth year. The objective of that proposal was to avoid constant changes and possible confusion for users and the competent authorities. The issue of the periodicity of amendments would also have financial implications, particularly with respect to the printing and distribution of new regulations which represented excessive costs for Argentina and other countries in the current climate of cuts in public spending.

Mr. PRENDERGAST (Jamaica) noted the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its third session (E/1997/31) and paid tribute to the Commission's work in improving understanding of science and technology policies. The substantive theme and focus of the work of the Commission during the inter-sessional period 1997-1999, namely, "Science and technology partnerships and networking for national capacity-building", was of particular relevance to many developing countries.

His delegation recognized the importance of continued cooperation between the Commission and UNCTAD on science, technology and innovation policy reviews and hoped that future discussions on reform would highlight the paramount importance of the Commission.

Ms. HURTADO (Consumers International) said that privatization, deregulation and globalization had enhanced the need for strong consumer protection measures, especially in countries where access to basic needs was limited, health and safety measures weak, market conditions lacking, consumers did not have the benefit of consumer education, and Governments were struggling to enforce protective legislation. The United Nations guidelines for consumer protection were thus invaluable, although their implementation varied from country to country.

The foremost objective of consumer policy in the developing countries was the satisfaction of subsistence needs and the protection of health. Consumer policy also promoted economic development by encouraging manufacturers, retailers and consumers to act responsibly, and by enabling all people to be heard, educated and obtain justice. The testing of products by consumer organizations and other procedures relating to price and quality

control helped to eliminate market deficiencies and improve quality, efficiency and accountability, thus improving conditions for economic development.

In recent years, her organization had sponsored major conferences in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America to assess the implementation of United Nations guidelines and their extension into new areas, as proposed by Council resolution 1995/53. Moreover, in response to a request by the Commission on Sustainable Development, her organization had prepared a preliminary text of new guidelines on sustainable consumption patterns.

The decision to extend the Guidelines had been greeted with much enthusiasm by consumer organizations in view of the global trend to deregulate and privatize public utilities, the globalization of financial markets and trade liberalization, cross-border selling and advertising, the advent of the Internet and related issues. Such organizations would be greatly encouraged if the Council were to adopt a resolution emphasizing the need for intensified national and international efforts in the area of consumer protection and taking practical steps to extend the United Nations guidelines.

Her organization thus supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report on consumer protection (E/1997/61) that an interregional expert group meeting be held to elaborate recommendations for guidelines on sustainable consumption patterns for submission to the Council, at its 1998 session, through the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Mr. HWANG Yong Shik (Republic of Korea) said he wished to highlight two particular implementation programmes adopted by the General Assembly at its recent special session, namely, the transfer of publicly-owned environmentally sound technology, and the environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes. With respect to the former, it would be recalled that his Government had offered to finance a feasibility study including the compilation of country case studies and a legal review of a number of developed and developing countries. That feasibility study was well under way and would be completed by the end of 1997, subsequent to which his Government would host an inter-sessional expert meeting, in February 1998, to review the report of the study.

As for the issue of the environmentally sound management of radioactive waste, he welcomed the inclusion of a very comprehensive set of components in

the outcome of the special session, dealing with transboundary movements of waste, their disposal, storage and transportation, and the prohibition of export of such waste material to countries which did not have appropriate waste treatment and storage facilities.

His delegation looked forward to the early establishment of international and regional mechanisms for the sound management of radioactive waste and expected that the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted at the special session of the General Assembly, would provide a strong and sound basis for sustainable development at the national and global levels.

Mr. N'DOW (Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat)) said, in reply to the statement by the representative of the Russian Federation, that he could rest assured that UNCHS was committed to development in the countries with economies in various stages of transition, and intended to pursue its activities in the Central and Eastern European region.

Reference had been made to the need for UNCHS to intensify its involvement in the task forces. He noted that comment and the further comments on the periodicity of the work of the Commission on Human Settlements and the prevailing sentiment that the biennial cycle should be maintained. He hoped that the reforms recently proposed by the Secretary-General would place the Centre and the Commission on a secure footing.

Mr. VOSSENAAR (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said, with reference to the comment by the representative of Argentina that the report on trade and environmental matters (A/S-19/4-E/1997/13), might not have fully reflected the important work of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), that General Assembly resolution 50/95 requested UNCTAD and WTO to report to the General Assembly and the Council on progress in the area of trade and the environment. The WTO secretariat had submitted a full report by CTE to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session and to the recent special session of the General Assembly. In preparing its report, UNCTAD had worked closely with the WTO and outgoing Chairman of CTE. The report was designed to reflect the progress made in trade and the environment and create better understanding of the relationships involved and a more informed environment for discussion.

Through the management system within the Commission for Sustainable Development, UNCTAD, in its capacity as task manager, had been working very closely with the WTO secretariat, and the secretariats of other bodies on issues relating to trade and the environment. With respect to the particular example cited by the representative of Argentina concerning domestically prohibited goods, he pointed out that UNCTAD had reported on that issue to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourth session. He referred the representative of Argentina to parts of the report which would provide him with further information.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.